



*European Economic and Social Committee
The President*

Berlin, 27 June 2012

30th Meeting of EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee

Staffan Nilsson's Keynote speech during the Seminar: Communicating Turkey

Seul le texte prononcé fait foi

Check Against Delivery

Dear Minister Bagis, Dear Co-Chairs, Dear members of the EU-Turkey JCC, dear participants,

I am delighted to take part in this 30th meeting of the EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee and in this Seminar on Communicating Turkey. Minister Bagis, I am once again very honoured to sit next to you in a panel. Your personal support and your contributions to our debates are always very much appreciated. I also wish to thank you for your support during the Euromed Summit that we co-organised in Istanbul in November last year.

I am very pleased that our today meeting could take place in Berlin. I wish to thank Mr Arno Metzler - Co-Chair of the Joint Consultative Committees on the EESC side, who took this initiative and made it possible. I wish to thank the German Federal Minister Rösler, for hosting this event and for the very good cooperation with his staff during the preparation of those two days.



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I welcome the idea of having this Seminar with you today, on the margin of the meeting of the EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee. It is crucial that the meetings of our Joint Consultative Committees with civil society representatives of candidate countries open up their debates to a wider audience of civil society representatives on both sides.

The Joint Consultative Committees must be tools for communication, for disseminating information, and for giving reality to the concept of participatory democracy. Holding this JCC meeting in Berlin provides us with an excellent opportunity to use this joint body as a tool for exchanging ideas with a broad audience. In this respect, I wish to thank Mr Kolat and Mr Freiherr von Leoprechting for their personal involvement in this event. They helped us a lot in reaching out the Turkish community living in Germany.

Why is the initiative of holding this Seminar meaningful to me?

Firstly, because the enlargement policy has to be discussed among civil society organisations and among citizens. The EESC, as an advisory body to the other EU institutions, is always expressing the view that the enlargement process cannot be only in the hands of civil servants. Of course, the accession negotiations have to be conducted by the European Commission on one side, and by the public administration of the candidate country on the other side. But this process cannot be the only one for the enlargement to be successful.

There needs to be some space left for public debate and for consultations and inputs from civil society in the process. Because in the end, the enlargement will mean new rights for every citizen, new opportunities but also new rules for all. So the society at large needs to be informed and involved in the process

Secondly, it is crucial to have those debates in the EU member states. The enlargement policy is very often debated among politicians, scholars, opinion leaders, EU representatives in Brussels. It is also very high on the agenda of the governments and of the media in the enlargement countries. But unfortunately, there is very little information available in many EU member states on the current enlargement countries and on the EU enlargement policy. National debates in our various EU countries are focused on the harsh economic crisis, and on national politics. The EU is often depicted in negative terms, and even



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sometimes held responsible for the turbulent economic times our countries are going through. National debates are thus unfortunately on how to have "less EU" and not at all on the future of it. That is why it is very important to have this debate with you today. The enlargement of the family must be debated among the family members.

Thirdly, it is crucial to have the communities of the enlargement countries involved in such important debates in the countries of the EU. The organised civil society representing the Turkish community living in Germany can certainly play a role in that perspective. You are the best go-between to promote Turkey's accession to the EU. Your organisations promote the culture of Turkey in the EU. They help fighting stereotypes within our societies. This is necessary to influence the mindset and positions of many political leaders and political parties across the EU on Turkey's accession to the EU.

Some of you, representatives of the business sector are also a very important bridge to bring Turkey closer to the EU. Exchanges of goods and services, business trips are the best way to know each other and to understand on both sides the advantages of a future accession of Turkey to the EU.

But we are here to hear your views. According to the status of the EESC, we are an advisory body to the other EU institutions. So today we are willing to hear your advice. And we will then pass on your advice and messages to the political authorities in the EU and in the member states. So I am looking forward to hearing your views on the enlargement policies of the EU, on the EU-Turkey relations, and on the role of your organisations in these processes.

To conclude, I wish to reassert that the EESC has always been and will remain a promoter of the enlargement of the EU to candidate countries in general, and to Turkey in particular. We will continue to advocate for this policy vis-à-vis the other EU institutions in Brussels.

I am sure the Seminar of today, which the EESC will replicate in other EU countries in the future, can help us in achieving our common goal. I am also convinced that civil society organisations in which the Turkish community is engaged in many EU countries can replicate such events. This will help us to send a positive and a welcoming message to the perspective of Turkey's accession to the EU.



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Thank you for your attention. I am looking forward to hearing your views and taking part in the debate.

I am now pleased to give the floor to Ms Eralp, Director of the EU Institute.



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